

Paul Polink: Although, Colonel Grossmith talked to me ... about staying in the service, and ... the Jets were just coming in. And he said, "I can foresee a great future for you in the Air Force." But I wasn't listening - I just wanted to go home.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah. You couldn't see that future at that point. [Laugh]

Paul Polink: No.

Janis Kozlowski: What was the name of that colonel that talked to you?

Paul Polink: Colonel Grossmith – G-r-o-s-s-m-i-t-h. He was our squadron commander - and a greater person, I never knew in my life.

Janis Kozlowski: Really! So, you really admired him.

Paul Polink: I did.

Janis Kozlowski: What characteristics did he have that you thought made him such a good leader?

Paul Polink: Well, he was a ... he knew everybody in the squadron. And he ... he was a very active baseball fan - and I played baseball; I got to know him personally. But if anybody was having a tough time, he would try to work it out for them. And of course, if it was money, he wouldn't hesitate to ... advance the money to anybody. And he ... he was just a great person. And ... and he maintained a high level of morale. And it was a, it was a great squadron to begin with, and I was very lucky to have been in the 54th.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember his first name?

Paul Polink: Yes, I have an article here ... Louis ... Lieutenant Colonel, L-o-u-i-s B. Grossmith [Lt. Col. Louis B. Grossmith, Jr.].

Janis Kozlowski: Let me ask you about the missions again. You said you ... that your squadron hauled some priority people on some of these trips. And you mentioned Governor Gruening and six U.S. Senators going to Kodiak with you. Do you remember any of the other dignitaries, or priority people that your squadron flew?

Paul Polink: They're ... we also had some USO personnel we would take from time to time. In fact, one of our planes – not mine, but one of our planes - took Joe Louis, you know, the heavy weight boxer?

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, yeah. [Ah-huh]

Paul Polink: Anyway, they took him to various places around the islands. And he put on exhibitions. And I can remember ... several Colonels and Generals, but I never knew their names. And I never was introduced to them - they were passengers, naturally, high priority.